

# QUARTERLY JOURNAL



**Articles of Literary and Cultural Interest**

# **QUARTERLY JOURNAL**



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# QUARTERLY JOURNAL

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## FROM THE EDITOR

The papers contributed at the Seminar on Modernisation of Tribal Culture organised by the Manipur State Kala Akademi in January 1976 have been presented in the present issue of this journal. Seven tribal communities namely Paite, Kom, Mao, Kabui, Tangkhul, Hmar and Thadou have been covered out of the 29 recognised tribes of Manipur.

Every human society, nonetheless the tribal society, undergoes changes in the process of response to many types of changes whether man-made or natural which are sometimes beyond human control. The emergence of the tribal society into the modern era may be said to have started since the beginning of the present century as a result of two main forces which penetrated the tribal belt of Manipur and caused a change in the mental outlook of the people. Thus the change in their world-view provided the spring-board for changes in different fields. The two forces are Christianity and urbanization. Other forces are subsidiary to them.

The cultivation of traditional faith among the tribes of Manipur became gradually neglected since the beginning of the present century when the influence of the Christian missions in the neighbouring tribal areas became already considerable. Christianity which operated in a limited area during the British days in Manipur has been able to make the widest coverage today, and in testimony, the majority of the tribes of Manipur have become Christians.

From the sociological point of view, Christianity means modernity among the tribals in various facets of their life, and the change in their material culture is very remarkable. Though improvement in the general economic condition of the tribes since the post-independence

period might be responsible for the change in their material culture, Christianity was undoubtedly a driving force for the adoption of the new way of life and behaviour. Today, many are found to have adopted western dress and their habitats too have shown the absence of many pre-Christian traits.

An equally significant force is urbanization which works in more than one way. Since the beginning of this century the valley oriented in-migration of the tribes of Manipur had taken place and the process is still continuing. With the growth of Imphal as a big urban centre and supplemented by a number of smaller commercial places being declared as towns, the tribes could get the advantage of urbanizing themselves. The growth of urban centres not only provided facilities for the tribes to settle in the urban areas, but also increased their frequencies of commutation between the village and the town. This provided some sort of an "urban drift"—the commuters to the urban area serving as transmitter of urban way of life to the rural folks when they go back. In view of the constant and frequent contacts between the tribes of both rural and urban areas, the rural habits of the tribes living in the urban areas have not completely disappeared. This phenomenon may be called the peasantization of the tribes of urban areas.

The spread of Western education, inter-ethnic relations as a result of contact with the non-tribal population within as well as outside the state and their active participation in the political development of the state are some of the subsidiary forces responsible for modernising the tribal society of Manipur in general.



# THE KOM

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## TEBA KOM CHRISTIAN

The Koms are found to inhabit the hills and plains of Manipur. Change is an inherent quality of human society, and the society of the Kom tribe has also changed. Today the Koms are scattered in a number of villages, and many of them have now left their old hill villages and have started settling in the plain areas of Manipur. It may roughly be estimated that about three-fourths of the Koms have settled in the plains of Manipur and they have been exposed to contact with alien cultures to a great extent.

Every student of social history will be glad to know that the Koms, like any other tribes of Manipur, have undergone considerable changes in their socio-economic life and the study of the changes which have been taking place in their society is naturally a very interesting one. It may be mentioned here that the Koms have no longer remained in their old primitive way of life now. Though a few belonging to older generation have still retained the age-old traditional habits, many of Koms are found to have adopted new ways of life and they have entered modern world so far as habits and ways of living are concerned. The Kom culture has adopted many modern facets of the civilized world, and these aspects can be seen in their material culture, food habits, social life, religious practices, economic life, personal habits and manner and the like. In the following paragraphs we shall now describe briefly the salient features of their society where modern elements are found. Let us begin with their material culture.

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**MATERIAL CULTURE :** The things manufactured by them, the ornaments, the weapons for self defence, household goods, utensils, clothes, agricultural implements etc. come under the aspect of material culture. Even the type of house they build is an aspect of material culture. As we study the history of the Kom tribe we find that from around the 19th century many of them started migration towards the valley of Manipur and the contact with the plains people coupled with the improvement of their economic conditions was responsible for a gradual change in their habitation and the type of house they build. Instead of the old and traditional thatched houses, they are now capable of building pucca and C. I. sheet roofed houses, and such houses are found in a number of Kom villages in the valley of Manipur. In design and pattern there is nothing Kom in character and they are identical with that of the other plains people. Similar is the case with other artifacts produced by them. In the field of agriculture, the traditional practice was the use of hoe. Though this practice still prevails in the remote hills, in the valley they have learnt plough cultivation with a pair of bullocks. Again, for self-defence, they used to possess bows and arrows, but today they have round a better weapon in gun which is not manufactured by them. About a century ago they were almost ignorant of chairs and tables. A mat or wooden stool was used. But now, modern chairs and tables have become common possessions of many Kom households, and even in the interior Kom villages, such modern furnitures are found. In very early age, the Koms particularly their womenfolk used beads and cheap stones, but nowadays they are found to use gold ornaments also made by local gold-smiths. This means the designs adopted are the general ones and do not belong to Kom. One great change in the culture of the Kom tribe is found in their

## **The Kom**

**dress.** From half-naked condition of pre-historic times to the well dressed Western look of a modern Kom, one can easily estimate the extent of change that the Kom society has undergone so far. The change in dress or costume is in two ways. First, improvement in the weaving of traditional costume and second, adoption of Western dress. When mill made yarns are available, the production of loin-loom cloths bearing traditional designs could appear in a number of varieties, and to add to this individual skills have also been utilised. The adoption of Western dress came almost along with the spread of Christianity in Kom society. We shall come later about the spread of Christianity in Kom society. The adoption of Western dress is not today restricted to the younger generation alone. The adoption of Western dress is almost universal especially among the menfolk while the womenfolk too do not lag far behind. The artistic beauty of the female cloths woven at the loin-loom still charms not only the wearers but the onlookers also. Many educated girls are found still to wear beautifully woven loin cloths and the complete adoption of Western dress by the female population will take a little more time.

**RELIGION :** Religion has brought considerable change in the life of the Koms. In the past the Koms believed in the spirits and other natural forces. Ancestor worship was also prevalent. Any object having supernatural power received reverence from the people. That was the period of animism. But with the coming of Christianity in their society, there has been a gradual change in the total outlook of the people. Christianity has taught them the concept of heaven and hell, the true meaning of god and the virtues that one can earn from the knowledge of god. The new religion has a far reaching effect upon the culture of the Koms so far as their attitude towards life is concerned.

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**SOCIAL LIFE :** Let us now examine the aspects of social life where the people have entered from primitive to modern. One important social activity, the performance of which had great religious significance was head-hunting. It was practised from the belief that the spirit of the killed will become the slave of the killer in his after-life. This primitive practice has long been abolished by the British and it is almost forgotten by the people as one of their old customs. Inheritance is another aspect. In olden days, the property of the father went to the youngest son, but nowadays the prevailing rules have become very complex. Similarly headship of a village was elective but nowadays it has also become complex. One great change towards modernity is found in the fields of marital rules and practices prevalent in the present-day Kom society.] The most common traditional practice for procuring a wife was by serving by the boy at the house of the girl's father for three years. In anthropological science such a practice or custom is called marriage by service. Nowadays, such a practice is considered a thing of the past and very few are found to observe it. Instead of marriage by service, many Christianised Koms are found to resort to marriage by elopement or love marriage. Payment of bride-price was also an ancient practice, but today, the payment is not strictly enforced though still prevalent. On the contrary the Christianised Koms are trying to remove this custom. Tradition further shows that the Koms were monogamous, that is a man had one wife only. But, today, due to outside influence, it is not rare to find a number of males having more than one wife at a time. Besides the above, there are a few more aspects which will be of interest :

## The Kom

(Aspects)	(Past)	(Present)
Water for domestic use	From stream, pond, etc.	From stream, pond as well as from tap.
Comb	Considered sacred.	Considered like any household article.
Grave-yard	One specific <sup>7</sup> place for the whole family.	Christians have separate grave-yard from the non-Christians.
Theft	Unknown.	Prevalent among the people.
Sport	Hunting.	All types of modern-games.
Genna	By hanging a dog's head at village gate. No entrance of outsiders into the village.	Except in case of epidemic, no restriction for entrance into the village.
Sickness	Sacrifice to evil spirit for saving the sick person.	Modern medicines are used.

Let us now have a look into the economic aspect of the Koms and the modernisation in that aspect. In the past, the Koms had an agricultural economy, and to a great extent their economy is still agricultural. But, with the increase of population of educated persons and as a result of their settlement in the urban areas of Manipur, many of the Koms are found to take up non-agricultural works as their means of livelihood. It is not rare to find a number of Koms in government offices, in trade and commerce and other occupations. Before

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concluding this paper, I would like to make a brief reference to the changes as regards personal habits and manners of the Koms in general. Mention had already been made about the adoption of western dress. With the adoption of modern dress, they now wear modern hair style. Younger generation has become a victim of the modern trend of keeping the hair long. The Koms took bath rarely in the past and washing of cloths was almost never done. But nowadays, the Koms take bath almost regularly without exception and keep their cloths clean as far as possible. Smoking was unknown in the past. Chewing of tobacco leaves was resorted to. Nowadays they smoke cigarettes. It is a sad thing that respect for the aged which was strictly observed is not considered an important aspect of personal behaviour. In the past traditional songs were sung. Such songs are now known to a few elderly persons only and Christian songs and hymns are becoming more and more popular.

In view of the fact that the Koms have been exposed to modern civilization hardly a century ago, the Kom tribe still remains as one of the backward tribes of Manipur specially in the field of education and economy. The entry into the modern way of life by the Kom tribe has both the good and bad aspects.

## THE PAITE

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—H. KAMKHENTHANG and  
THUAMSON HANGZO

The Paite of India and the Tedim Chin of Burma identify themselves as one people. One Nisu Pau of Tedim writes that the Tedim ( Paite ) people have the largest population among the Chin tribes in the Chin State of Burma and they have an air of intrinsic satisfaction. ( **Unau Pata Cih Buang—SIAMSINPAWL 1974, p. 52**—an annual magazine of the Siamsinpawpi, Churachandpur ). The bulk of Paite population is in the Chin State of Burma. The **Chin Magazine 1974** puts the population of the Paite ( Tedim ) at 67, 869 persons while the Paite population in Manipur according to Census of India 1971 is 24,755. The actual population figures of Paite in Mizoram and Assam are not known. In Mizoram the Paites are a sub-tribe of Mizo whereas in Manipur they do not regard themselves as either Mizo or Kuki. They feel closer to the Chin people of Burma. As the term 'Chin' is not a Chin word, many Chins in Burma like to discard the name in as much as the term 'Kuki' has no more popular acceptance in Manipur. Laimi and Zomi are the ethnic names of the Chins of Falam and Tedim respectively to replace the word 'Chin'. These two terms mean nothing but 'hill people.' The identification of the Paite with the Chin of Burma is reciprocal.

Many Paites had already been absorbed in Lushai society in Mizoram and they can identify themselves very easily with the Mizo. The term 'Paite' is not a new name in Manipur and Mizoram. It was a name given by the Pawis, Lushai, Hualngo etc. The Paites, like the Kabuis, are

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known by various names due to political and environmental factors. The Paites of Mizoram are fairly advanced in their way of life under the influence of the Lushais, while in Burma their way of life is more traditional. The Paites of Manipur are in between. Before Pax Britannica, people of one village were greatly isolated from the other for want of satisfactory communication and for fear of enemies. The lack of inter-village communication and exchange of view and ideas among the Paites of different villages in the past produced linguistic variations among the people. It is not rare to find tonal difference in Paite language from one village to another village even to this day. It is possible to ascertain a person's village or locality on hearing his speech.

It is difficult to say in what context the culture of the Paites of Manipur may be called modern or otherwise. The Paite culture may not be said to be modern if we examine it with reference to Indian culture or western culture. The Paite culture has grown more or less independently of the Indian culture though influence from the mainstream of Indian culture cannot be ruled out. The total outlook of Paite culture is tribal in spite of the fact that they have attained western education. The outlook of the educated person is not always modern with reference to Indian society. They feel awkward in Hindu society because of their inability to pick up Indian languages satisfactorily. Even many educated Paites in Manipur do not speak Manipuri well. It is now a high time for the different sections of the people of small state like Manipur to know each other well.

Like other cultures, the Paite culture is not static. Christianity has brought tremendous changes in Paite culture. The old generation is unable to give up traditional culture in favour of the Christianised western culture and as a result some form of culture conflict arises between the old and young generations.



## **The Paite**

### **RELIGION**

The traditional religion of the Paites may be grouped under animism. Many older folks in the society are still animists while the younger generation has accepted Christianity. The old religion of the Paites is called **Puu-sa** which is believed to have been founded by two orphan brothers Thangho and Laindo. Originally **Puu-sa** involved cumbersome sacrificial rituals and many non-Christian households even are found to have ignored such observances. Religious sacrifices are made only in rare cases like when a man in his dream was asked by the spirit to make sacrifices.

In case of illness the Christian and non-Christians depend on modern medicines as far as they can. In serious illness the elderly persons especially the non-Christians like to make sacrifice to the evil spirits. Prolonged illness like tuberculosis is treated with medicine and traditional sacrifices to the evil spirits, if the head of the household is a non-Christian. Exorcism is resorted to as the last means of curing the ailment. The efficacy of modern medicine is well known among the non-Christians and the illiterate adults but the root of the ailment is supposed to be demonic. Like other cultures, the Paite culture is not free from belief in superstitions though Christianity condemns belief in superstitions. Even the educated persons and church leaders like pastors and evangelists are not exceptions so far as belief in superstitions is concerned.

Many Paite Christians hold the tenet that a Christian should not drink, sing traditional songs, dance traditional style and sip **tuibuk** ( nicotine water ). Younger generation thinks that sipping of **tuibuk** is a sign of outdatedness and non-Christianity. As a consequence of this the equilibrium of the society is greatly disturbed. Some

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are of the opinion that the Christians will not practise traditional dance even for cultural show. Christians are supposed to abstain from liquor as imbibed by the early Christian missionaries. Some educated persons are now to realise as in Mizoram that Christians also drink while holding their faith. Traditional songs and their and their tunes are dying out. No Christian songs are composed in the line of traditional songs and the tunes too are different from the traditional ones. Almost all the Christian songs are translations from the original English composed in western tune. Only a few intelligentsia of the society now realise that religious songs be composed in traditional tunes in order to preserve at least certain cultural traits before it is too late. A person singing traditional songs whether under the influence of liquor or not is looked askance and regarded as an out-dated person. As such Christians abstain from singing traditional songs which are labelled as **Khovel-la** meaning the song of the animist. **Khovel-la** is considered to be the song of the non-Christians while a Christian is expected to sing devotional songs and songs of worship which are popularly called **Pathian-la** meaning the songs of the god. Adoption of Christianity is like a modern fashion now in Paite society. A non-Christian wishes to die as a Christian for the sake of being modern. A non-Christian or a nominal Christian likes to be known as a Christian rather than a non-Christian. By becoming a Christian a man gets more advantages from the members of his society. For example, at the time of his death, his dead body will be disposed of by the members of his church organisation. The church organisation will take partial responsibility of his affairs at woe and weal. Before Christianity the dead body was buried by the relatives of the deceased and as the rituals associated with burial were many and complicated, the disposal of the dead was a difficult task

## **The Paite**

for the families with few relatives. In present-day Christian society, a person has to help his fellow Christians in their difficulty. So when there is death or marriage in a village the whole church organisation is involved like the traditional household council. The household council plays a major role when a marriage takes place in a household. The church is not a plenary organisation for a household at such a function. Marriage is controlled by the household council backed by the church organisation. The work done by the church organisation for a fellow villager is extensive if not intensive.

### **DRESS**

Western dress has almost replaced the old traditional ones. Men put on shirts and pants while women use blouse and pattacoat. No period of nakedness is traceable in Paite society. In olden times a man put on a jacket reaching down the knees and a turban while at work. At other occasions, two pieces of shawls were worn : one around the waist and other wrapping over the shoulders. The hair was kept long and tied in a knot at the nape. Even a poor man does not like to dress like this now. He rather prefers awornout and dirty shirt and pants instead. The women use unstitched pattacoat ( *nikphei* ) in the past. People prefer fine mill-made cloth whenever they can afford, but for the workers home spun cotton cloth is better, cheaper and lasts longer and it suits rough works in the jungle. Workers do not like mill-made cloths while working in the field as they last hardly one season. On Sundays, all take rest and are found in their best clothes. Formerly before the advent of Christianity there were no days of rest. Christianity brought names of the seven days in a week. Girls prefer their own home-made shawls to Manipuri handloom products because of their longevity and pattern of weaving. Paite

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women do not give much appreciation for Manipuri ceremonial clothes like **phanek** and **innaphi**. Colourful Naga shawls find their way among the Paites. Shawls originating from Mizoram find easy acceptance in Paite society. Naga shawls are very popular among the Paite women of Manipur and Burma. As almost every woman is a good weaver, she can just produce what fanciful cloth she has seen. In this way, Sema shawl of Nagaland and Tangkhul shawl of Manipur find their way in the Chin state of Burma through the Paites of Manipur. The traditional unstitched petticoat mentioned above has been revived now in the Chin state and is called **zonik**. **Zonik** has been adopted as one of the national clothes of the Chins. **Zonik** incorporates patterns of **nikphei** and Burmese **lungi** and it has become popular among the Paite girls. Males and females now wear shoes. When a man is at home, he puts on either a shawl or a Burmese **lungi** around the waist.

### FUNERAL SONGS

The Paites are divided into a number of clans and each clan had mythological songs to be sung at the funeral of a clan member. Nowadays many do not care to know what were the mythological songs of their clans and no such songs are sung at the funeral in any Paite village of Manipur.

### LITERACY

The Paites have made some progress in the field of literacy. In this respect the church organisation has been doing a great deal. It runs schools in villages where there is no government school. In such schools the medium of instruction is Paite. Text books are written in Paite and the government has approved introduction of Paite text books upto class IV from the

## **The Paite**

year 1975. The first Paite primer appeared in 1903 in Assam and Manipur. Formerly literate persons taught adult illiterates how to read and write on voluntary basis in the Sunday schools. This also removed substantial amount of illiteracy. The purpose was to make them able to read the Scriptures in Paite. Many books are now published in Paite. A number of monthly, fortnightly newspapers are published in Paite both in India and Burma. It appears that the Paite may be one of the tribes of Manipur having the largest number of books as revealed in the book exhibition organised by the Directorate of Education, Govt. of Manipur a few years ago. But, in Paite literature there is no definite system of spelling, punctuation etc. and there is much to be done for evolving a literary language in Paite. According to **Siamsinpawlp** **Annual Magazine 1974**, there are more than a hundred Paite graduates in Manipur. The achievement made in the field of higher education was after the World War II. Many parents have now realised that their children will be nowhere without education unlike what it was thought some 20 years ago. Tribal economy being self sufficiency at subsistence level, many parents find it difficult to send their children for higher education. In the past one attained higher social status or prestige by virtue of one's success in hunting and it was believed that a person achieved easy passage to the abode of the dead if he killed a number of enemies. Such beliefs have become obsolete now and there is competition for achievement of education and wealth.

### **SANITATION**

In the matter of sanitary and hygienic conditions the people are still lacking much behind the general mass though considerable progress has been made with the spread of western education.

## THE MAO

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—K. ASHOLI

The population of the Mao in Manipur according to the 1971 census is 33,379. The bulk of the population is found in Manipur North district. The distribution of the Mao population appears to be far flung, and a good number of the Mao will be found in Nagaland as well as in different parts of Manipur particularly in Imphal.

### Village

Since long years back the Maos had been enjoying settled life in large villages each over one thousand inhabitants and mention may be made of villages like Pudunamei, Punanamei, Kalinamei, Song Song, Makhan, Liyai, Tunggam etc. Every well established village has a gate at the entrance and thick wooden planks are used as the gate and on both sides stones are laid one upon another to form a massive wall. The construction of a village gate is always associated with ceremonies and any repairing work is undertaken on a genna day. The village boundary is properly marked by fencing or by planting thorny plants. There is active repair of the boundary sometime in the early part of August every year. Here and there within the village there are gaint stones to sit on or from there one can have a view of distant places. Every village has a headman. In the past he had to perform a number of duties. Undoubtedly he happened to be the custodian of villiage agricultural calendar and also acted as the religious head. He was believed to have held great responsibility for the general health and prosperity of his village. Nowadays the Village Authority has taken the responsibility for the

## The Mao

routine administration of the village and the importance of the headman is usually recognised at the time of social and religious functions.

A typical Mao house has three rooms. The front room is used as verandah-cum-store room for keeping fire-wood. The middle room is meant for keeping domestic animals like cows and pigs at night, while the third or rear room serves as kitchen-cum bed room. The roofs are thatched and wooden planks are used for walls. Rich families decorate their front walls with wood carving of animal or human heads or faces. Every family maintains a kitchen garden by the side of the house. Domestic animals and fowls are let loose during the day time within the village. The early Mao was very unhygienic in his personal habits.

Washing of utensils and sweeping of the floor were never done for the belief that such an act might drive away the spirit which brought prosperity and wealth in the house. With the coming of Christianity and modern education, such habits of the old generation are seldom found in the present day Mao society. Another change in the habitation of the Mao people is the construction of latrines by every household. Latrines were unknown in the past and any quiet and shady place served as latrine.

In the construction of houses also, rigid and elaborate ceremony is not performed by the people specially by the Mao Christians, and houses are built even outside the village boundary. It is not rare to find C. I. sheet roofed houses nowadays.

An important feature of village life which is fast disappearing is the dormitory system. Unmarried girls and boys had separate dormitories. Boys' dormitory is called *Ikhruchi* and girls' dormitory *lilochi*. Each dormitory may consist of five to eight persons or so. The

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boys and girls used to sleep in their respective dormitories until they got married. The dormitories were substantially the training ground of social norms and civic sense. At night boys may visit the girls in their dormitories and their might be exchange of views, group discussions and songs. It was the responsibility of the keeper of the dormitory to see that unbecoming behaviour did not take place among the boys and the girls. The accepted practice is that the boys should return to their dormitories before dawn. This dormitory system has been fast disappearing in the wake of modern western education, and in their place youth clubs have come up in every village.

### Food and Drink

The Mao people are non-vegetarian. Besides vegetables, almost all types of meat which are considered fit for consumption, unless otherwise prohibited on religious grounds, are taken. Meat of cat or bat is believed to have healing properties. The meats of those despised creatures like snake, lizard, tiger, vulture, rat etc. are not taken. Traditionally the young folks are forbidden to take eyes and brains of animals. These are meant for old people.

Rice is the staple food of the people. They take two meals in a day. One in the morning and the other in the early hour of the night. Curry is taken with salt and moderate quantity of chilli. Normally oil is not used as a cooking medium. people keep smoked or dried meat for use at any time. Usually such dried meat is cooked with vegetables. Traditionally milk is not taken as an item of food by the people and they seldom milk their cows. Fruits are available in plenty during their seasons, but the Maos are not regular fruit-eaters. The rice-beer or 'Zu' is more than a drink to the Mao people particularly



## **The Mao**

in the early days. It is associated with a number of ceremonies. Rice-beer is also used for entertaining guests and relatives. Persons of all ages drink rice-beer. Two types of rice-beer are prepared by the people: 'yecho' or the milder and also the popular type and 'tomataya' the stronger type.

### **Dress**

There is no evidence to show that the people went in complete naked condition. No doubt the menfolk were scantily dressed, but women were better clad than men. The earliest cloth of the people was 'khraisa' which was made of the fibres of 'khrailo' plant. With the availability of yarns came a number of clothes bearing different colour combinations and designs. Clothes like 'Khepikadesa' are considered prestigious and meant for merited persons like stone pullers. After the last World War II, use of western dress like pants, blouse, shirts etc. is on the increase. Most probably no attention was paid to children's dress. The children used to go naked until they attained the age of puberty. Boys and girls when they attained puberty were allowed to wear either a kilt or a piece of thin plain cloth chiefly to cover their private parts. Every married woman is expected to wear an undergarment called 'npfiimainokhro' which is a kilt-like piece of cloth with red and black stripes. This undergarment is considered a sign of bad omen, and because of wearing this undergarment, women are seldom asked to join in important functions. Hence every female wearer takes enough care so that this undergarment does not show in public. Among the ornaments used by the people, mention may be made of the necklaces which were purchased from travelling traders from time to time. Most of the necklaces are made of shells and colourful stone beads and some of them were highly valued

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so much so that they could be kept as security for transactions of other properties. Once it was considered a disgrace to move about without a necklace by both the sexes, but menfolk have given up use of necklaces. Neckties have replaced necklaces among the boys.

### Ear Piercing

Piercing of ear lobes of children of both sexes when they attain the age of two or three months is customarily performed in the morning or before sunset by engaging an elderly man who knows the job. He is usually given three logs fire wood by the family, though the quantity may vary from family to family depending upon the capacity of the families concerned. The ear-piercing is done with a bamboo-needle with white thread allowing the thread to remain at the earlobes. It is to be observed that Mao people do not pierce their earlobes for wearing ornaments only but also for fear of misfortune or ill luck which is believed to befall upon a person or his soul after his death if his earlobes are not pierced. Therefore, replugging of earlobes is done, if the holes are found blocked, for every person including the dead before burial.

### Marriage and Family

Formerly big families were few and far between in the Mao society. For want of medical care, the rate of infant mortality was high and outbreak of epidemics like small-pox and cholera reduced the size of a family to a considerable extent. Thus, the average size of a family was four or five persons only. With the improvement of medical facilities the death rate has now been reduced considerably and the average size of a family stands at six to eight persons today. Joint family is not fertile to take its root in Mao community. By and large the father is the head of the family and his authority is pervading over all the members of the family.

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Even then, the role of the mother is never minimised to an insignificance. Rather, she is considered the queen of the house and has better say in her household affairs.

The Mao women work as hard as their male counterparts. Rearing of children, feeding of domestic animals, collection of fire-wood from the hills and helping their menfolk in the agricultural field comprise the major works of the women. As such, women are left with limited leisure time. The status of women in the society is lower than that of men. Women suffer from a number of disabilities. For instance, they are not allowed to participate in certain important social functions. They have no liberty to carry on trade and commerce. They do not go out for hunting as the males do. They are not allowed to participate in armed combats. Again, they cannot inherit any movable property. Under the customary law of inheritance, the house of the parents will go to the eldest son. The unmarried sons have to be sanctified annually during the Saram puja. Moreover, every year the male members have to take holy bath on special gauri day. As to food and drink, there are restrictions for the girls. All these go to show that men have more social status than women. Today the Mao women have been liberated by the influence of modern education and have become free women, opportunities.

### **Marriage**

Arranged marriage is the only socially recognised type of marriage. Elopement is never a rule and child marriage is entirely unknown. A boy is said to have reached marriageable age when he attains 20 years of age. An old practice was that the girls had to shave their hair until they were married. There was as such a common tendency on the part of parents to give their

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daughters in marriage just to enable them to keep their hair long. The first marriage of a boy or a girl was rarely successful. Instances are not wanting to prove that many persons got successful marital life after third or fourth marriage. This practice has been viewed with great disfavour specially by the Christians who believe in the indissolubility of marriage.

A go-between is engaged to carry out the long process of negotiation between the two parties and it is generally officiated by an elderly woman. Dreams and omens play a decisive role in the preliminary talks. First, the parties consult their dreams for a night. Should the dream turn out to be favourable, then the negotiation will proceed. If the dreams are unfavourable, a second chance may be taken in the next month, or the proposed negotiation may be dropped. The second stage of the negotiation relates to the amount of property or article to be contributed by each party. Virtually speaking there is no fixed bride-price or dowry system. Cows and rice are contributed by the bride's party. Paddy field and wood-land and a basket of rice may be contributed by the groom's party. Nothing is fixed as a rule. It all depends upon the ability of either party. Some other articles like necklace of rare quality may be considered as an essential item of the negotiation. If the parents of the bride are not rich, they may not contribute cows. Anyway, marriage contribution is considered a question of prestige of the family. So parents feel compelled to contribute as much as they can. **Chithonikhro** ( January ) is earmarked for marriage. Sometimes marriages may take place in other months but the period following the harvest season is taken to be the best season of marriage as the people can afford to be a little more extravagant while their granaries are full.

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**After the negotiation a day is fixed for the marriage. In the evening of the day before the marriage, an old woman from the boy's side will go to the girl's village carrying rice-beer and a pair of hoes. She spends the night in the house of a relative or a friend in the girl's village. The purpose of her visit is to fetch the girl to the boy's house for solemnising the marriage. The old woman presents rice beer and the two hoes to the parents of the girl as a token of newly established relationship. The bride spends her uneasy night with her girl friends in the dormitory. In the wee hour of the morning she is called back home to get herself prepared for going to the boy's house. She feels embarrassed in front of her parents and the old woman. With mixed feelings, the girl cannot help but shed tears. The girl paces slowly out of the house and she is given company by her friends, both boys and girls, for some distance beyond the village gate. After that she goes to the boy's house led by the old woman. When they arrive, the old woman gives a signal and the groom will come out immediately to receive the bride by waving two hoes first over the right foot of the girl then over the left foot. The girl is then led inside the house and there is an exchange of rice-beer in cups made of leaves between the girl and the boy.**

**The bride hands over her cup with her left hand and groom gives his with his right hand. Then the cups are kept at the opposite walls of the house. After this the bride is seated on the bed of the groom's parents. As she feels too shy to speak, she covers her head and almost her face too and does not take enough food even. Consummation does not take place on the first day. The groom leaves a cloth of his with the bride and goes to his old boys' dormitory to sleep while the bride sleeps with a small girl at her husband's home. The next or the**

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second day is called *pithe kosho* meaning 'raising of separate hearth'. On this day the groom goes out in the morning to collect three stones to be the tripods of the kitchen and spends the day making wooden spoons. The bride on the other hand will fast during the daytime by taking rice-beer only and give at least a pair of her ear-rings to the girl she slept with the previous night. The bride will take the 'nuptial bath' at a nearby spring and shampoo her hair with foam producing *hrolo* plant diluted in water. The preparation is sent by the groom through some one secretly. The groom does not take bath at the same spring. It is taboo for both to see each other the whole day until the wooden spoons are brought home. In the evening the first meal is cooked by the bride.

The third day is called *Ongho koso* meaning first outing for field work. In fact, no work may be done on that day in the field. Some may cross the village gate and thereby deem to have completed the rite. The fourth day is known as *Ayido koso* meaning the first taking of food and drink from the bride's parents to entertain friends of the newly married couple. The bride goes to her parents' house early in the morning and returns by the same day in the evening with good food and rice-beer with the help of a few friends. Elders of different *khels* of the village may also be invited to enjoy the food and the drink. The fifth or the last day is called *Oghe koppfu* meaning the first fetching of brine water from the brine spring. The rejoicing associated with the marriage is concluded with a grand feast in *Chsthonkhro* (January). Traditionally the entire cost was borne by the parents of the bride and not less than thirty jars of rice-beer and a huge quantity of cooked meat and rice were brought by the parents of the bride

## **The Mao**

to the house of the groom for the feast. Nowadays the expenditure is shared by the groom's party by collecting cash contribution from the participants and giving it to the bride's parents.

### **Divorce**

Divorce was common in the past and it is still considered a normal phenomenon and as such it is tolerated by the society. Care is taken so that divorce may not take place during the five days of marriage rite as there are several situations during the five days of marriage under which divorce may take place. The bride has to walk carefully towards the groom's house on the first day of marriage. If she falls down and the articles she is carrying are scattered, then divorce will take place. Such a divorce is attributed to ill-luck of a high degree. Again, cow-dung is strictly avoided on the second day of marriage as a substance of impurity. If the bride or the groom is hit by someone with a piece of cow-dung, divorce will take place under the belief that such an incident is indicative of a life of constant aversion between the husband and the wife. Divorce will also take place when there is a death of a relative or even a domestic animal or bird on the day of marriage. Extinction of fire in the new hearth prepared on the second day of marriage or damage to the said hearth and the cooking utensils is another cause of divorce. Nothing is funnier than human life. Instances are found where a bride deliberately tumbles down on the way or breaks the cooking pots so that divorce may take place if she does not like the boy. However, this sort of deliberate effort is considered quite unbecoming and is not attempted usually.

### **Agriculture**

Agriculture is still the sole occupation of the people. The relation between man and land is so close that one

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who has no land to cultivate is branded a socially uprooted one. From early childhood, every Mao has to be trained in the art of cultivation. Rice is the staple food of the people and the cultivation of this food crop engages bulk of the working force. Normally agricultural lands are privately owned though there are a few lands owned by a **khel** or a village in common. Landed property is inherited by the males only and such inherited lands cannot be sold out. One can sell out lands acquired through purchase. In the Mao country reclaimable lands are so limited nowadays while there is a great pressure on land for want of an alternative or subsidiary non-agricultural occupation.

The paddy field are mostly rain fed. Monsoon can make or unmake the fortune of an agriculturist. The hill streams are without water after the rainy season thereby making double cropping difficult. The fields are irrigated by means of canals. Some canals are very long. As water is scanty, no water is to be diverted from a canal without the permission of the owner. Also a new canal shall be constructed only at a level lower than the existing one. Canals may be owned individually or communally.

There are two types of wet-cultivation. In one type there is water in the field for most of the year. This system is called **Mokodo**. In the other type called **Dotho**, water is kept during the period of transplantation and weeding. The second method is commonly adopted. **Jhuming** which was practised by the early people has now been almost given up. Seeds are selected from the produce of the previous year and kept separately. These are sown thickly over a thoroughly burnt area of about 15 to 20 square feet in late March or April. The young plants will be ready for transplantation by the month of June onwards. The usual time of harvest is from late October to early November.



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The most essential agricultural implements of the Mao people consist of axe, hoe, dao, ground leveller, sickle ( mikridoni ), wooden hammer etc. Men use a local made rain coat ( Onghii ) while working in the field during the rainy season. Similar coat for women is called Kodjii. Nowadays people are found to use wide plastic sheets as these are cheaper and handy. Almost every field has got a small hut which serves as a retiring place for the workers during the daytime.

### **Harvest**

The harvest day is an auspicious day for the Mao people. Though observance associated with it may differ from village to village or from house to house in details, the broad features are as follows. The father or the mother or in their absence their first son will act as the first reaper of the field. On the harvest day nothing is to be fried, burnt or roasted. No visitor will be allowed to enter inside the house. The fire in the hearth should not be extinguished. The first reaper will put two pieces of cooked meat and rice on the low embankment of the terraced field invoking the blessing of the god. At a convenient place a threshing ground is prepared and it is considered sacred. Talking and playing with grains within the threshing ground is strictly prohibited. No food is to be taken before a ceremony is performed during the mid-day. After that there will be recess and the mid-day meal may be taken. Every process of harvest is nothing but superstition writ large. Fresh grains collected from the standing plants are highly recommended for the sick and the aged under the belief that they may get quick recovery. Sickle is used to cut the stalks. Plucking with hand is seldom done and daos are never used. There are two ways of harvest. One is to cut the stalks on top below the spikes and thrash the grains at the thrashing

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ground. The other way is to cut the stalks at the bottom and leave them in small bundles for about two or three days to dry in the sun before these are brought to the threshing ground. Normally thrashing is done with a flail and the grains are winnowed thoroughly before these are stored in big bamboo baskets. The baskets containing paddy are sealed with cow dung.

### **Social Cohesion**

Social life is largely characterised by traditional principle of co-operation. For instance, when a person wants to build a house, all the villagers will help him by contributing labour and materials and the need of hiring professional house-builders does not arise. The skeletal work is completed within a couple of days. On the second day when the stage of roofing arises, a communal feast is offered by the owner of the house. By tradition, a dog is to be killed, shared the meat equally by the builders, and fowls are to be strangled for feasting with rice beer. The owner has to bear the whole expense for the feast. As regards walling of the house the whole village need not be engaged. It may be done slowly at a later stage by the owner with the help of a few persons only. No female labour is required except at the roofing stage. A woman will put a bunch of thatch on the roof by way of initiating the roofing work symbolising the fact that a woman is the sole performer of household duties. The roofing may be completed by the male workers then.

As regards the construction of a house of the headman the entire village is involved from the beginning upto the completion of the construction work. No one will be free to take up individual works. A series of gennas are pronounced during the period of construction. In ancient

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days, human sacrifice was resorted to before the construction of the house of the headman. Later on this ghastly practice had been replaced by a more tolerable one in the form of taking some hair or a piece of cloth secretly from one who belonged to unfriendly village. The hunted head or its alternative was buried underneath the plot where the house was to be constructed. The plot is offered free of cost with a right to inherit. Paddy field is also earmarked for the headman by the villagers.

Similar corporate activity is found at the time of agricultural operations also. In what is called *chikhro* which is commonly associated with terracing, the owner of the field will invite the whole village or his *khel* and he will serve the participants with rice-beer and Naga *dal*. Participants will come in their best dress with good food to take in the field during the mid-day recess. Expert singers are invited on that day to sing by way of enteraining the persons while at work. If there be any food or drink left after the work, the same may be consumed at a suitable place on their way back home. Another type of agricultural cooperation is called *Ava kasa* which is a kind of reciprocal work. Under this type, two groups of persons agree to work together in each other's field in rotation. Every one has to bring his own food and drink in the field.

Besides the above there are a few more instances requiring participation by every member in a village. One is what is called the 'Feast of Merit' which demands a good deal of free and compulsory labour and mass participation by all villagers specially the able-bodied persons. Such 'feasts' are nothing but a chain of ceremonies and gennas. To make it a success every able-bodied person is expected to participate lest he will be socially

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condemned or even boycotted. Again, when a death takes place in a family, the whole village will observe genna. Those who have gone out to work in the field are also called back to join the rest to mourn the death. Food and drink are offered by the villagers to the bereaved family, and the disposal of the dead is the responsibility of the entire village. Those who abstain from mourning the death are denounced implicitly by the villagers. Boys and girls will sleep in the house of the bereaved family for at least three days by way of keeping company and sharing their sorrow.

In the Mao society, no sick person is ignored. When a person is seriously ill, boys and girls will go to sleep in the house of the sick person by way of comforting and assisting the family. Another good example of corporate life is that when a child is born, villagers will contribute salt, rice, chickens etc. and give these articles to the family where the birth takes place.

# THE HMARS

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—Darliengsung

“Khaw Sinlung ah,  
Kawt siel angka suong souka,  
Mi le nel to tamae,  
Hriem mi hraia.”

( Out of the city of Sinlung, I came out like a mithun. Innumerable were the encounters with the children of men ).

The above folk-song of the Hmars suggests that Sinlung was the ancient home of the Hmar people. According to the Hmar historian Hranglien, Sinlung is located somewhere in south-west China. The Hmars were a nomadic tribe and their march towards south-west began a few hundred years before the Christian era. When they reached the Shan state, they learnt better skill in agriculture and warfare, and also the use of iron implements. Mawni, Sozam and Tamlopa were the first blacksmiths of the Hmars.

As famine arose, they left Shan state and marched towards the unoccupied areas in the Indo-Burma borders. Many of them today are found in Manipur, Mizoram, Chin Hills as a well-settled community.

## HABITAT

Since the people were a nomadic tribe, it was not possible for them to have fortified villages. However, they put stockade of wood around the village and there were two or three main gates. The youths were responsible for the maintenance of the stockade. When peace had been brought during the British rule, the stockades had been removed. The houses in the village

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are built on stilts in a row. Functionally a house is divided into four parts : the open porch called **sawngka** which is used for drying clothes, for relaxation and entertaining friends, **sumphuk** or the enclosed verandah where pounding of paddy in the mortar is performed, the main room where cooking and sleeping take place, and **namthlak** which is a long and narrow platform along a wall serves as a seat for visitors. Every house has a small kitchen garden at the back.

Almost every village has a **buonzawl** or **sier** (bachelor's dormitory) which is maintained by the whole village. A large fireplace is also constructed where fire is kept burning day and night. By the side of the fireplace an open space is also provided for recreational activities like wrestling, dance etc. All the unmarried boys above fifteen years of age are required to sleep in the dormitory while boys between six and fifteen years of age are required to supply fire-wood. When a boy fails to supply the stipulated quantity of fire-wood in a month, the same will be collected from his house. As soon as a boy completes fifteen years of age, he will sleep in the dormitory. For the proper functioning of the dormitory, a leader known as **Valupa** is appointed. Male visitors below forty years of age are required to sleep in the dormitory, and normally such a visitor is expected to participate in a wrestling bout in the most friendly manner. He is also taken to various houses and is introduced to the villagers.

### VILLAGE ADMINISTRATION

Every village has a chief (called **Lai**) and he is assisted by a number of ministers or **Khawnbawls**. The chief of the **Khawnbawls** is known as **Khawnbawl-upa**. The chief and his ministers decide all types of disputes in the village. They are also responsible for proper

## **The Hmars**

**distribution of the village land to each household for cultivation. The village priest is next to the chief in power. He performs sacrifices for the sick and the dead, offers prayer for agricultural abundance, and sanctifies the village from the influence of evil spirits. There are two other important officers known as Tlängsam (announcer) and Thirsu (blacksmith). Tlängsam proclaims the orders of the chief and his ministers while Thirsu repairs all kinds of agricultural implements and also makes new tools.**

**Though chiefship has been abolished now and a new administrative machinery known as the Village Authority has been introduced, the role of the chief and his ministers cannot be said to have been minimised. The house of the chief is a harbor of refuge. A criminal taking shelter in the house of the chief cannot be harmed and he is protected until his case is heard. Each house pays an annual tribute of paddy to the chief.**

### **THE CLANS**

**The people are divided into a number of clans viz, Biete, Changsan, Chawrai, Darngawn, Faihriem, Hmarlusei, Hrangchal, Hrangkhawlh, Khawbung, Khawlhriing, Kholte, Leiri, Lungtau, Ngente, Ngurte, Pakhuong, Sakechek, Sakum, Thiek, Vangsie, and Zote. In the past each clan had a dialect of its own but nowadays a common dialect has been developed for all. The Christian missionaries are responsible for the development of a common dialect among the people.**

### **FAMILY**

**The Hmar family is patriarchal. The father is the head of the family. He represents the family in all public meetings, directs the family affairs and is the sole bread-winner. The mother looks after the household**

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chores like tending domestic animals, cooking the daily meals and taking care of children. Occasionally she brings fire-wood from the jungle. Usually the people practise joint family system and when a boy marries, he lives with his parents.

### MARRIAGE

The clans are endogamous and one can marry almost any woman except close female relatives. When a boy wishes to marry he sends messengers to the girl's parents. They take with them rice-beer or tea, a blue cloth and a white cloth and also a hoe. The clothes ( called **ln hawi** ) signify family happiness and the hoe ( called **thirdam** ) denotes peace between the two families. If these articles are accepted by the parents of the girl, the marriage will take place at the house of the boy. Among the Christians the marriage is solemnised in the church.

The bond of matrimony is loose and if the wife wishes to divorce, she will persuade her parents to refund the bride-price ( **suminsuo** ), and similarly the husband can also divorce his wife by paying what is called **makman** i.e. forty rupees. Widows often remarry and there is no custom against this practice. Child marriage is unknown and sixteen years of age is considered the minimum marriageable age.

### INHERITANCE AND ADOPTION

Customarily the youngest son will inherit ancestral properties. However there are certain clans like Leiri, Khawlun and Changson among whom the properties go to the eldest son. Women are not allowed to inherit any property. Adoption known as **Saphun** is practised among the Hmars, and even favourite slaves are adopted. This is done in a simple ceremony.



## The Hmars

### SLAVERY

Slavery was very common among the Hmars. There were four types of slaves: **Input suok**, **Chemsen suok**, **Taklut suok** and **Sal**. **Input suok** includes widows and infants who cannot support themselves and took refuge in the house of a rich person or the chief. They were employed according to their ability and in return they received food, shelter and clothings. They were allowed to marry and start their own families. The second type refers to criminals who, in order to escape from the consequences of their evil action, took refuge in the house of the chief. **Taklut suok** or the third type were voluntary slaves who sought refuge in the house of a rich person or the chief when famine broke out or enemies were after them. The householder was entitled to retain such slaves as long as he liked. The last type or the **Sal** consists of those captured in tribal war. They had no status and could be sold or bought or even exchanged for guns and spears. Slavery has now been abolished completely in the Hmar society.

### FOOD AND DRINK

The Hmars are non-vegetarians and their staple food is rice. Since the agricultural produce is not sufficient, they supplement their food supply by resorting to hunting. They are fond of **chilli** and some of their favourite preparations are **chartang** ( a mixture of meat, chilli, ginger and salt ), **hmeapaok** (stew) and **changal hmeih** ( meat or vegetable cooked with chilli and soda extraced from ash ). Needless to say shat rice-beer called **zu** is a popular drink of the people on all occasions.

### DRESS

Two type of cotton—white and light brown, are grown by the people. The white cotton is sometimes dyed in desired colours. The girls take pride in their weaving

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skill and they weave clothes at their loin-loom for domestic consumption. The male dress consists of a narrow loin cloth and a tunic-like shirt and a wide sheet of cloth for covering the body during the cold season. Women generally dress better. Their dress consists of a petticoat, colourful loin-cloth and a blouse. With the coming of Christianity, the dress of the people has become fairly Westernised.

### POTTERY

The Hmar women are good potters. Whenever a new site is chosen for settlement, they look for *bepil khur* (potter's pit where suitable clay is found). The common pots prepared by them consist of *bubel* (rice-cooking pot), *hmebel* (covering or eating plates), *nganbel* (pot for distillery) and *zubel* (rice-beer pot).

### AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is the main occupation of the people. Jhuming and shifting cultivation is practised in the hills. From around January they clear the agricultural site by felling trees and bamboos and burning them when dried up. At the first sign of rain, the cultivator goes to his field with a hoe and a small bag of seed flung over his shoulder. The whole village will join him in corporate labour. In this way they would go from one field to another sowing from five to six fields a day.

### RELIGION

The traditional religion of the Hmars is centred around the worship of the supreme deity called Pathien. Pathien is believed to be the creator of all beings. They also worship the spirits of the mountains, the rocks and the rivers. Khawchawn is an evil spirit which frequents the village at dusk. Zasam is a dreadful spirit of the forest while Phung, also an evil spirit, causes sickness and

## The Hmars

dizziness. Khuovang and Lasi are benevolent spirits. The people resorted to human sacrifice in order to propitiate their deities and the last human sacrifice was known to have taken place while they were in the Shan state. As the story goes, one Larsi lived with his wealthy step-mother named Cherchawng. She became seriously ill. A number of sacrifices were made but she did not improve. Finally a slave was sacrificed and when Larsi saw it, he was terrified and ran away. He started a village of his own where human sacrifice was forbidden. He became very rich and healthy and seeing his prosperity and good health, people followed him and gave up human sacrifice.

### LIFE AFTER DEATH

There is a traditional belief that when a person dies, his soul goes to the land of the dead. One such place is Mithikhuo. All common people, it is believed, live in Mithikhuo when they die. **Thangsuo** or brave man who has killed many wild animals or cultivated a thousand baskets of paddy in a year is believed to live in Pielral when he dies. In Pielral, the **thangsuo**s are believed to be fed with rice and meat by fair maidens. Only the souls of pious and holy persons are expected to live in Vanram—the heavenly abode. It is believed that other souls have to spend a considerable time in Mithikhuo and Pielral before entrance is given to Vanram.

In 1910 one Christian missionary W. Robert arrived in Senvon village in Manipur. Needless to say that the first Christians among the Hmars were the inhabitants of Senvon village. Today a large majority of the Hmars have become Christians.

### LITERACY

Before the arrival of the Christian missionaries in the Hmar villages, the spread of education among the

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Hmars was negligible. Along with the spread of Christianity in 1910, W. Robert was also a pioneer for introducing Western education among the Hmars. The first school was established in Senvon and one Mr. Tangura became the first teacher. Mr. Thangura composed many hymns which thrilled and enchanted the minds of people to accept Christianity. No doubt the new religion broadened the outlook of the people and with the increase of Christian population among the Hmars, the number of schools also increased. In 1920 there were more than thirty schools in the Hmar area and today the number is about 200, most of which are being run by the Christian missions. The Hmars enjoy a high literacy percentage in Manipur.

## THE TANGKHUL

- Y K Shimray

The introduction of Western education in the Tangkhul area may be said to be the beginning of modern life of the Tangkhuls. In 1896 when a lower primary school was opened at Ukhrul not a single boy came for admission. Somehow with the help of the then Political Agent Mr. A. E. Wood, 20 boys from Ukhrul and 10 boys from Hundung were admitted. In the beginning the boys did not care to learn and they were very stubborn and did not obey the teachers. One Meitei (Mangolchao Singh) was the only teacher to assist the missionary teacher Pettigrew. Whipping did not improve the boys, and one day in order to punish them they were confined in the Mission Bungalow after the school hours. The villagers, thinking that the white man and his wife would eat their children, came with spears and swords to 'save' their children and they surrounded the Mission Bungalow. Mr. Pettigrew was weeping while the British moved up and down the road expecting to take any mishap. Fortunately the headman of Ukhrul who was their Manipuri language teacher was also present. With great difficulty she convinced and persuaded his men to go back peacefully. On another occasion the Missionary family was nearly killed for taking photographs of the school children. In old days the Tangkhuls believed that photography was nothing but a witchcraft. They thought that the soul of their children were being transported to the land of the white men. The headman again came to enlighten his people.

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As months went by, the boys began to learn. They started cutting their hair in the Western style and they learnt the use of shirts and pants. Gradually the people began to appreciate the works of the Missionary family for what it did to their children.

### DRESS AND HABITAT

In many villages nowadays better buildings have come up. Wooden planks are used for the wall while corrugated iron sheets are used for roofing. Rich people have now constructed **pucca** house by engaging professional house-builders. Many have improved type of furnitures.

Men use Western dress and very often with shoes and neck-ties. Even the poor people are seen wearing pants and coats not as a fashion but by way of following the trend. Most of the womenfolk use Meitei **phanek** (loin-cloth) and Tangkhul **chadar**. They also wear shoes and sandals. Many boys are keeping their hair long while the girls are also seen wearing pants and mini-skirts. It is not rare to find girl in short hair. Boys and girls mix freely in schools and outside.

### LAND AND FOREST

Needless to say that land and forest are the sources of livelihood of the people living in the hills. It is a pity that the importance of forest is ignored by the people. Even the educated persons do not seem to realise the value of forest. In old days, deforestation was strictly prohibited. For the purpose of preserving the forest a special Act called MEIYAN was enforced. Under this Act, no person went unpunished if he set fire to the forest wilfully or by mistake. If the culprit escaped unpunished the chief who was in charge of the area concerned had to suffer the punishment. The contrary happens nowadays. Many cut down trees at random and they hardly care to plant young trees in lieu of them.

# **The Tangkhul**

## **OCCUPATION**

Majority of the Tangkhuls are cultivators. A good number of the educated persons are in service, contract work and business. Traditional occupations like salt manufacture, carpentry, pottery are very much ignored nowadays. There is improvement in handloom weaving in some villages and tailoring also has become a popular occupation. There is little development in horticulture and pisciculture in the Thangkhul areas.

## **WATER SUPPLY**

There are a number of springs in the hills and people make wells at the mouths of such springs for containing water. When there is a spring in a private land, the owner cannot object to making a well in his land and a path to it for people to come. Washing and bathing in the wells are not allowed. The water is kept as clean as possible. Separate water tanks called **Khorjop** are provided for the animals. In some places, with the help of the government concrete embankments of the wells have been made having outlets for surplus water. Only a few villages have tap-water and the supply system in general is far from satisfactory.

## **TRADE AND COMMERCE**

There is no big market place in the Tangkhul areas. Only small shops are coming up at different places but due to lack of better communication facilities the goods are sold at very high prices. In the remote and interior villages barter system still prevails. Since Imphal is the biggest market of the state, food crops and spices are transported by head-loads from the village to the main road and sold at less than half the price prevalent at Imphal.

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### GAMES AND SPORTS

War dance, group hunting etc. were important sports of the people in the past. The old sports are almost forgotten and modern games like foot-ball and hockey have become very popular among the people. Yuletide is the best season for games and sports in the hill. During Christmas, all persons irrespective of age and sex, participate in varieties of games and sports. Some of the popular sports during Christmas are football for men, relay race for the girls, race for old men and women and tug-of-war for all ages. Matches are always accompanied by feasting.

### MARRIAGE

In the past, inter tribal marriages were unknown. Nowadays, cases of inter tribal marriage are not rare to find. Customarily such a marriage was not prohibited. As in the past, the Tangkhuls still enjoy love marriage through a match-maker engaged by the boy. However, before the actual wedding takes place all the customary rights and privileges are possessed by the parents of both the parties. Christians do not pay bride price. A Tangkhul marriage should have the following three conditions —(a) landed properties are to be apportioned for the bride, (b) Christians should follow the holy Sacrament in the church while the non Christians should finalise the bride price and (c) arrangements for a wedding feast.

The groom will give a wedding feast to the whole village. The married sisters of the groom and the bride's family make substantial contributions towards the feast. Both the bride and the groom receive a large number of presentations from friends and relatives. At the end of the wedding feast the groom's family and the bride's



## **The Tangkhul**

family sit together and distribute the sundry presentations to friends and relatives. One of the best clothes is given to the pastor who performs the marriage and similar cloth goes to the match-maker also. Other articles like radio, sewing machine, tea-set and the like are kept aside for the couple. On the second day, the couple will invite their friends—both boys and girls, at a dinner meant for the women of both the parties. After that the couple will spend their honeymoon at the house of bride for a few months and sometimes for even one year.

### **RELIGION**

In old days, the Tangkhuls worshipped a number of deities believed to inhabit the jungles. In 1906 the first conversions of the Tangkhuls into Christianity took place and with the increase of Christian movement in 1923 many were drawn into the new faith and today nine out of ten have become Christians and it will be a matter of days only for the few non-Christians to become Christians. Almost 90 per cent of the Christians are under the Baptist church and about 9 per cent are Roman Catholics and the rest are under the Seventh Day Adventist. With the coming of Christianity the people threw away their pots and vessels used for distilling liquor and the menfolk gave up their 'crest-like' hair style. There was a craze for singing Christian songs and the singing of traditional folk songs was even considered sinful. It was only after the independence of the country that wider consciousness grew up for preservation of cultural traditions.

### **DANCE AND MUSIC**

Many educated persons do not seem to care for learning their dance forms. Only a few villages are trying to maintain and improve their traditional dance forms.

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The Tangkhuls possess rich varieties of songs. There is practically no occasion where a Tangkhul cannot sing. They sing when they are happy and they sing when they are sad. They seldom walk or work without a song. A woman sings over the dead body of her husband. Her song ( called *chapchat laa* ) is so pathetic that few could hold their tears. A man will sing to his wife when they go to bed. This song is called *pat laa*. They sing in the church, in the school, in every gathering or organisation. Singing is a part of their life.

If music is the language of life,  
Mr. Tangkhul is not far from it.  
If singing is the secret of joy and happiness,  
He is still better off.

## EDUCATION

In 1906 with the help of the government, 8 more primary schools were opened at important villages around Ukhrul. The products of the first lower primary school mentioned earlier were appointed teachers in these new schools on a salary of eight rupees per month. In those days, it was an attractive remuneration. Among the Naga tribes of Manipur the first matriculate and the first graduate were Tangkhuls. Today we find many of them are qualified as doctors, engineers, theologians, and so on. Some are high up in the administrative field and mention may be made of Mr. R. Khathing, the former Indian Ambassador in Burma and Mr. W. Shaiza, I.A.S., the Administrator of Laccadeeps. Almost in every Tangkhul village there is a school and 80% of the schools are run by the villages. No parents are happy if they cannot send their children to schools. The villagers raise funds for the establishment of schools and they build schools with their own hands. The people are proud of their only degree college located at Ukhrul and they cherish

## The Tangkhul

that colleges should come up with government assistance so that more people can receive higher education-

### CONCLUSION

Through the centuries the Tangkhuls have changed from the primitive to the modern. Head hunting was completely abolished. Necromancy and belief in the spirits of the woods have been discarded as things of the past. Many pre-Christian practices like **U-hongba**, **Kathi-Kasham**, **Onra-Kasa** etc. which involved huge expenditure and sacrifices were abolished as early as 1935 by the Tangkhul Long Meeting. Christianity and modern education have brought a variety of changes for the betterment of the life of the people, yet their society is not free from undesirable elements generated by modern times. Whatever the changes brought by the wheel of time, the Tangkhuls are on their way to progress as citizens of this great country ever singing their patriotic song :

Kaphung tungli dolan sada,  
Awon eina sari shaksa ;  
Kathar masi, khanim ura,  
Nawui naobing kalamahai !

( The heights are thy wonderous palace,  
Colourful flowers thy glorious robe ;  
Fresh air, pure water, all thy grace,  
Ever be true, thy children's hope ! )

# THE KABUI

—K. Meijinlung

All the tribal societies, not to speak of the Kabuis alone, have been undergoing several changes which are very radical in some cases. Change is always found in human society whether it is rapid or slow enough to be hardly perceptible to day-to-day observation. Today, the process of diffusion and acculturation or other processes of culture contact have been made more active by other modern means of communication like cinema, drama, literature, radio, television, newspapers etc. Tribals can no longer remain socially isolated from the bigger societies. Among the tribal people of Manipur the whirlwind of change in their life and culture arose along with the introduction of Western education and Christianity, and the Japanese invasion of Manipur in 1942. The changes in the life and culture of the Kabuis are conspicuous in their material culture.

## HOUSE

The traditional house of the Kabuis consists of three rooms or sections and a verandah. The frontal room is meant for guests, the middle room for the householder and also for the hearth, while the third room is meant for female inmates. Nowadays in the Kabui villages in the hills and the plains a large number of modern houses can be seen without having the above room arrangements. Needless to say that in Imphal, the Kabuis have constructed highly modern buildings with sanitary fittings etc. Till about the pre-war period, white washing of the walls was the prerogative of the rich or the headman

## The Kabui

having **Tarangkai** type of house. There is no customary ban now in the beautification of houses among the Kabuis.

### TOOLS AND IMPLEMENTS

Though earthen pots are still used, a large variety of utensils used by them are made of brass, aluminium and steel. Tools and weapons for hunting or fishing are replaced by better ones. Many households are found to possess guns. Modern household gadgets like pressure-cooker, stoves etc. have found their way in Kabui households.

### DRESS

The Kabui possesses a rich variety of costumes woven at their traditional looms. Their women are expert weavers. There are varieties of clothes meant for men, women, unmarried persons and even children. Today, such traditional clothes are used on ceremonial occasions and on the dead bodies before burial. On the contrary, younger generation is found to use modern dress and follow the modern trend in fashion. The sights of boys in the dress of Western cowboys and girls in trousers or other fashionable dresses are no longer unaccustomed to our eyes.

### HAIRCUT AND ORNAMENTS

In the past a Kabui girl could be distinguished by her hair-style i.e. a semi-circular cut around her forehead, and the ornaments on her wrists and upper arms. Nowadays the women keep their hair long and groom it in the common Indian style. Their ornaments too do not differ from that used by the majority of Indian women. It is only on ceremonial occasions that men and women wear traditional ornaments. The piercing of the ear-lobes is an important custom of the Kabuis. There is also a belief

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that a person whose ear-lobes are not pierced will be mistaken for a monkey when he dies by the lord of the dead Taroigwong. Many boys are seen without their earlobes pierced as they consider ear-piercing unfashionable.

### AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is the main occupation of the bulk of the population. Terraced cultivation is being introduced gradually besides the traditional modes of cultivation viz jhuming and shifting cultivation. Those living in the plain have since adopted plough cultivation with a pair of bullocks. Some have brought in mechanised tilling with passionate zeal for the past few years.

### GAMES AND SPORTS

The Kabuis have varieties of games and sports. High-jump ( the traditional style is to jump over a mithun or a buffalo), long-jump, stone-putting, wrestling and race are the popular sports of the males. Tug-of-war is a game in which females can participate. Girls are fond of **garing** a game played with the seeds of a kind of creeper. Such games are associated with their festivals. Nowadays such games and sports take place in festive mood and not so much in a sense of competition. Many are now attracted to sports organised at the state and national levels where there is wider field for competition. Football has been very popular since the pre-war days and many good cricketers were also produced among the Kabuis under the royal patronage of the late Sir Churachand of Manipur.

### LITERATURE

From the era of oral tradition the Kabuis have now entered the stage of written literature. They do not have script of their own now though their tradition says that they had one. During the 20's, Jadonang put into use a kind of script for the Kabuis which is said to have evolved through divine inspiration. But for all educational and

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**practical purposes the Kabuis of the plains use the Bengali script. The Kabuis have been getting school education through Manipuri medium while in the hills they prefer books in Roman script and written in Kabui language. For the first time in 1934 steps were taken to put down oral tradition into written record by the Kabui Samity which was a socio-cultural organisation comprising the kindred tribes like Zemeis, Liangmeis etc. At the close of the World War II, the Samity was re-organised under the name of Kabui Naga Association which in 1947 accomplished the codification of some aspects of Kabui customs. The Association later on became to be known as Zeliangrong Naga Union. There are a few committees like the Kabui Literature Committee and the Rongmei Christian Literature Committee which have made considerable progress in the development of Kabui literature. Some printed dramas, novels, poems, short stories and books meant for primary stage of education have appeared in the treasury of Kabui literature. Although attempts are being made for standardisation of spelling, it is not an easy task for the reason that Kabui language is a toned-language and it has slightly different regional accents. Besides the Bengali and Roman scripts cannot do full justice to tone and pronunciation of the language.**

### **DRAMAS, MUSIC AND DANCE**

**During the 30's, the Kabuis began to develop a taste for drama. The Kabuis living in imphal valley displayed a craze for the performance of staged drama. In Kabui settlement areas like Keisamthong, Kakhulong, Majorkhul etc. historical dramas were performed in temporarily constructed stages. The zeal and enthusiasm for staging dramas were so high that a sense of competition grew among them. In 1934 under the auspices of Kabui Samity,**

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a drama based on the folk tale Kabui Kei-oiba was performed at the Royal Palace by a Kabui troupe who came down to Imphal with more than a thousand persons to offer their congratulations to the king Sir Churachand Singh on his achievement of the title of K.C.S.I. The post-war period saw further advancement in the field of drama as things became better organised. With the coming of Kabui Naga Dramatic Union theatrical performances are keeping pace with the modern trend and development.

The traditional musical instruments consist of drum, cymbal, gong, flute, **labung** ( fiddle ) and **tso** ( string-mouth-organ ). Modern Kabui music shows fair adaptation from film songs as evinced from Kabui programmes of AIR and other social gatherings of youngsters. Mention must also be made of the Kabui dance which is very much well known among the tribal dances of Manipur. There are varieties of dance for males and females.

### RELIGION

For centuries the Kabuis of Manipur valley have been in close contact with the Meiteis. It may be said that there was very little difference between the Kabuis and the pre-Hindu Meiteis in religious matters and it was only after the conversion of the Meiteis into Hinduism that they became an alien cultural group to the Kabuis. However the Meiteis have exerted influence on the religious belief and practices of the Kabuis so much so that the Kabuis are now accustomed to consulting Meitei astrologers and soothsayers in matters relating to birth, marriage and other important occasions. For more than a century, the Kabuis have been keeping horoscopes and consulting them through Meitei astrologers. The Meitei **maibas** and **maibis** also perform exorcism or **pujah** offered to Hindu or Meitei deities on behalf of their Kabui



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patients. On occasions, Kabui **maibas** are also engaged for treatment of Meitei patients through **pujah** or **exorcism**. Without the slightest hesitation and in a festive mood the Kabuis join Meitei religious festivals like **Baruni**, **Cheiraoba**, **Durgapuja** etc. This is indicative of the closer social ties between the two communities and it should not lead us to believe that they are losing faith in their religion.

*Contact with Christianity*: Conversion into Christianity has brought a radical change in Kabui culture. The first conversion took place in December 1915 and more than fifty percent of the population have now accepted Christianity as their religion. The Kabui Christians have abandoned all the traditional institutions and anything that is traditional is considered un-Christian. Some have ignored or even violated the traditional law of **exogamy**. Though Christianity could make considerable progress in the Kabui areas, the hurdles might have been considerable as the people are more deep-rooted in their traditional way of life.

*Rise of traditionalists*: In the late twenties of this century, Jadonang, a young Kabui mystic of Puilon (Kambiron) rose with a programme of reformation affecting the religious belief and socio-cultural life of not only the Kabuis but also of the kindred tribes like **Laingmei**, **Zemei** etc. He propagated to give up certain forms of **gennas** and **taboos** which he considered useless and unprogressive. He introduced the installation of images of their supreme deity **Ragang** and His consort and erected temples of these deities. These are novel traits in Kabui culture and religious practices. After the death of **Jadonang** in the hands of the British, unfinished tasks were taken up by his associate, now **Rani Gaidilliu**. She has abandoned all minor deities and

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spirits of the traditional pantheon and introduced a monotheistic cult known as **Heraka** which was a formal worship of their supreme deity Ragang. Many became followers of this new cult which was branded as "heathen movement" by the Kabui Christians who took up a stand to challenge this movement. (**Great Awakening** : Zeliangrong Christian Association, 1972, p.37 ). During the last decade, the movement of the traditionalists appeared in Imphal valley through organisations like Mhang Cultural Research Society, Ragang Champa Society etc. but due to lack of clear-cut programmes of action affecting the mass and for want of able leadership, no substantial impact was made.

### CULTURAL CHANGE

The changes produced by modern civilization and culture contact are not only on the explicit side of Kabui culture but also on the implicit side. Here a cultural crisis usually occurs due to incompatibility between traditional ethos and modern values: social, economic and political. The use of loud-speakers in customary festivals, brides riding an elephant or a car in marriage procession, a band-party leading a funeral procession etc. have not affected the traditional ideas and values. Rather such changes are aspired as items adding grace and beauty to the occasion. There are a few other cases which deserve a close study. In some Kabui settlement areas modern houses have been constructed and let to outsiders on rent for economic consideration and so on. Besides public roads are also found to pass through such settlements. These situations present great challenge against traditional ethos and values when occasions like **neime** i. e. ganna arise requiring confinement within the village boundary and preventing others from entering inside the village from morning till sunset.

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Think of the interest of the outsiders, of the villagers themselves who are in different walks of life in the wider society and of the closure of the public road running through the settlement areas. In order to cope with these situations, the village elders who are the sole guardians of religion and spiritual matters decided more than a decade ago that during period of genna, the village gate would remain closed upto noon. In a place like Majorkhul the pressure of socio-economic forces became very strong that the villagers observed genna for a few minutes only. However, the villagers often consult their shaman called **Moojung** as regard duration of genna observance.

Another significant change is the decline of authority of the headman and his council. In the past the tribal villages enjoyed maximum autonomy without external interference in their internal administration. A tribal village was like a 'miniature republic'. In the present political set up, Kabui villages or settlement areas have become either a part of the municipality or the panchayat or similar such larger administrative bodies. With the decline of traditional administrative machinery, other institutions dwindled too and here mention may be made of the boys' dormitory (khangchu) and the girls' dormitory (luchu). These institutions from where the younger generation learnt singing, dancing, wrestling, fighting and moral and spiritual disciplines, have lost much of their vigour and grace. With the coming of Western education requiring regular attendance of classes, periodical examination etc. people began to give lesser importance to institutions like the dormitories, and today the existence of the dormitory is felt very little by the young people. The dormitories become active nowadays at the time of festivals and customary ceremonies only. Many are of the view that the revitalisation of the dormitories

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may cure indiscipline and delinquency among the younger generation. During the early part of 1960's the government took steps to revitalise the dormitories and gave grants to some Kabui villages, but for want of proper scheme the measure did not produce satisfactory results.

It would be worthwhile to note that in order to meet the new situation of the wider society, a number of social organisations, in addition to the traditional ones, have emerged in the Kabui society. Many Kabui villages have a number of organisations like the "school committee", "village development committee", "youths or women's association" and the like.

Modern society has changed the attitude of the people towards wealth and property. In the past when their wealth and riches were measured by the amount of paddy harvested and cattle they owned, the accumulation of wealth in these forms more than a certain limit was not of much use. They had also a belief that an excessive increase in one's wealth was due to a special grace of god and such wealth is to be shared by fellow villagers. Thus, the Kabuis have expensive customary practices like the **Banroo** ( feast of merit ) and **Tarangkai** ( ornamented house ) where sacrifices are made and wealth and possessions are distributed by the performers of such practices. The villagers are given wine, meat, cotton, ginger, chilli, pumpkin and other varieties of crops and corn that the Kabuis cultivate. The performance of such customary functions is believed to be one of the ways to heaven. Distribution of wealth and charity are advocated by other religions too. But in the modern times people rarely distribute their wealth and riches for a heaven after death. The Kabuis are under the stress of such conflicting values and ideas of whether they should get

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**rid of their properties and wealth for the traditional values of honour and for a heaven after life, or whether they should learn selfish accumulation and hoarding of wealth from the civilized society ? Whether they should give up the traditional cooperative way of living and live a life of selfishness and individualism of civilized society ? Such are the riddles of modern society posing a challenge to the traditional culture of the tribal people in general.**

# THE THADOU

—V. Kipgen

The Thadous settled in Upper Burma after fighting through many enemy countries and as their tradition has it, whenever they were defeated the eldest daughter of their chief was given away to the chief of the conquering tribe by way of peaceful settlement. For this reason, in the past the eldest daughters of their chiefs never married. Once at Tagaung, Thadou Thangja became a chief with the title of Dhaja Raja and his women observed **Thingyan** ceremony\* in which they washed their hair.

For a long time they lived in Upper Burma mixing with the local people and having inter marriages with them. In course of time their settlement extended upto Central Burma. There was a time when a Burmese king forced the Thadous to build a big memorial tomb in honour of his father and forced them to work at night even. This made life unbearable and the Thadous dispersed in different directions and many reached Chin Hills, Lushai Hills and Manipur.

## VILLAGE ADMINISTRATION

Every Thadou village has a chief known as **Haosa**. The chief is assisted by five or six elders ( known as **shemang pachong** ) in the administration of the village

*The adoption of Hindu name and Burmese custom like Thingyan suggests the extent of Burmese influence. The Burmese Thingyan which is an equivalent of Hindu Sankranti, and whose main event is sprinkling or throwing of water, offers liberal scope for participation by all irrespective of age, race, class or religion. Ed.*

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concerning agriculture, defence, labour, education, religion etc. The introduction of the Village Authority by the government for efficient administration of the village is not suitable for the Thadous as it ignores the chiefship of the **Haosa**. In Thadou custom a chief cannot be changed except when his son takes over chiefship due to death, &c. of his father.

### SOCIAL LIFE

Every village is a closely knit society living a harmonious life under the leadership of their **Haosa**. Every household will give free and compulsory labour for one day in a year for their chief. This is known as **khotha**. The chief also receives the head of the animal killed in hunting and when a family kills an animal, one leg of the animal, under what is known as **changseo**, should go to the chief. One's mother's brother's family has a special attachment with one's family. When an animal is killed he should give the neck of the animal to his mother's brother. The latter will also reciprocate by giving the waist of an animal killed to his sister's son. Under what is known as **nulam**, two persons have close family relationship if their wives happen to be sisters. A person usually makes one of his closest friends a **Be** or confidante. His **Be** will receive the breast of the animal killed at his house. The Thadous have organised groups for providing labour which may be necessary in all their activities like agriculture, celebration of festivals, religious performances, etc. They have three main groups known as **Lompi**, **Lomchang** and **Lambung**. **Lompi** is created by the youths of the village and for which they appoint an intelligent elderly married person to be their **Lom-upa** or leader. They approach the **semang pachong** with a jar of rice-beer and if the **semang pachong** accepts their request, the **Lompi** is formed. For the

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efficient functioning of the **Lompi** a few persons are appointed to be in charge of various functions. Two physically strong youths are appointed to be leaders in agricultural activities. They are known as **Lomhangva** or **Tollaipau**. For the control of the women, a female leader called **Lom-upi** is also appointed. For other sundry works like preparation of lunch and drinks, making seating arrangements for all the persons engaged in field works etc. two persons known as **Lomtucha** are selected to be in charge of these works. Besides two male wing-leaders for the male group and two female wing-leaders for the female group are also selected. The **Lompi** decides cases of disputes among the members. **Lomchang** is a smaller labour unit formed between youths of two groups of families in order to provide reciprocal labour in field work. Both sides have more or less equal number of members. **Lombung** is still a smaller labour unit formed between a few families only without any distinction between the number of persons available for labour work in each family. The formation of these labour units, besides providing immense labour in the agricultural operations of the families, removes the monotony of hard work as there are singing and dancing by some while the work is going on.

### DORMITORY

Traditionally one house in the village is selected to be the dormitory ( **Som** ) of the youths. They cannot have a **som** in a house where the family does not have an unmarried girl. The girl, or the eldest girl if there is more than one girl, will be the **somnu** or the 'girl of of the dormitory'. At night the member youths will spend their time in their **som**. An eldest male member known as **som-upa** will control the dormitory. **Som** is a training centre of the youths and at night before they



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go to bed they make a number of articles for household use. The **som** is a centre of physical exercises of the youths. Members of a number of **soms** may have youth festival called **som-kivah** in which among other things there is wrestling competition.

### DANCE

Thadou word for dance is **iam**. Dancing is a favourite pastime of the people. Solo dance is very rare and they always dance in groups or in pairs. Bamboo-dance is also a typical dance form of the Thadous.

### MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

The principal musical instruments of the Thadous consist of **lhemlhei**, **gosem** and **theile**. **Lhemlhei** is a mouth organ made of bamboo and brass. **Gosem** is made of dry rind of gourd to which seven bamboo reeds have been attached to produced different tones, while **theile** is a bamboo flute. With the coming of Christianity a number of Western musical instruments like guitar, mandolin etc. have been widely used by the people.

### MARRIAGE

Cross-cousin marriage, particularly marrying the mother's brother's daughter, is a preferential form of marriage among the Thadous. Marrying the father's sister's daughter is strictly prohibited. Among other prohibitions, a woman cannot marry a man from whose family a woman has been married already to the family of the first woman. Two brothers from one family cannot marry two sisters from another family elder brother marrying elder sister and younger brother marrying younger sister. There are five types of marriage namely **chongmou hailamdom**, **moukipui**, **gun**, **kijamang** and **kigai**.

**CHONGMOU HAILAMDOM** : When the boy's party arrives at the village of the girl, the girl's party splashes mud prepared with dung of mithun to the boy's party.

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When the boy's party enters inside the stilt house of the girl, girl's party burns chilli underneath the floor thus driving the boy's party outside of the house. There is wrestling bouts among men of both the parties beginning with the strongest ones and concluding with the weakest. If the boy's party defeats the girl's it is believed that the girl's health may not be well in the future. After this the girl's hair is divided into three parts and she crosses the threshold of her house with her left leg first. She is escorted to the boy's house at night.

**MOUKIPUI :** Boy's party comes with bride-price to the house of the girl. The parents of the girl will kill a pig. The boy's party will return with the bride and half the amount of the meat of the pig.

**GUN :** Boy's party kidnaps the girl without the knowledge of her parents.

**KIJAMANG :** The girl elopes with the boy without the knowledge of their parents who are against their marriage.

**KIGAI :** When the girl becomes pregnant, her parents bring her to the house of the boy.

Among the Christians, moukipui is the most widely accepted type of marriage. Gun, kijamang and kigai are still in vogue among the Christians and these types of marriage are formalised in the church.

## INHERITANCE

The eldest son inherited all the properties of the father. Traditionally when a son marries, he set up a new family of his own, and if he happened to be a younger brother, his elder brother would provide his basic necessities for one year. Properties referred to movable properties like domestic animals, utensils, furniture etc. and landed property could not be inherited as in the

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hills the people practised shifting cultivation. Fresh problems have now cropped up with regard to immovable property when many of the people have acquired permanent land for housing and cultivation.

### RELIGION

The traditional religion of the people is centred around the belief in supreme deity called **Pathien**. They have the concept of heaven and hell. In Thadou lore we have the story of a girl called Japhal of Hangsing clan. This girl did not come back home for ever, and in her father's dream a man appeared and told him to find his daughter in the form of a thing on the fork of a branch of **sething** (castanopsis) tree and to worship it for wealth and prosperity. This 'thing' was called **doibom** and when the father worshipped it, his wealth increased and he became a prosperous man. After this all began to worship **doibom** \*for both health and wealth. The special worship of it was done in April or May every year for bringing rain in the fields. Along with the introduction of Christianity in India and Burma, a large majority of the Thadous have become Christians today.

### FESTIVALS

The major Thadou festivals are **Lom-kivah**, **Chon** and **Hun**. **Lompi** will be in charge of celebrating **Lom-kivah** and they will collect money from the villagers for purchasing a matured mithun and for preparing about thirty jars of rice-beer. The festival is held at the house of the chief by erecting a tree of about 30 feet long with leafy branches on top. There are incisions on the tree at

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\* *The insignia of Japhal which is worshipped by every household particularly among the non-Christians is known as Iadoi meaning 'the deity of the house'. Ed.*

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certain places. There is competition of jumping over a standing mithun and similar other competitions of physical prowess among the youths. The rejoicing may last for three days or more subject to availability of drinks and eatables. Chon is of two kinds-Sa-ai and Chang-ai. Chon is celebrated at personal level. Sa-ai is celebrated by men who have killed a number of wild animals while Chang-ai is celebrated by women who have harvested a huge quantity of paddy. To mark the celebration of Sa-ai a wooden pillar having two branches is erected in front of the house of the person celebrating the festival. No pillar is erected at the celebration of Chang ai. In both the celebrations there is jumping over the mithun and other physical competitions among the youths and eating and drinking usually take place. Hun is a religious festival observed by non-Christians only in the month of April or May. The head of the household will kill one white cock and remove its bones. He will repair doibom (it is represented by one basket containing among other things one head of pig, one horn of goat and bones of cock. On the second day the house-holder will sleep prone on the bed for some time during the day. Eating and drinking are the usual features of the festival.

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